

The wide open door of the humanities

A call for papers

Physicians have many different ways of looking at the world. One is through the “filter of evidence”—searching for, appraising, and narrowing down the best evidence for how to practice medicine. *wjm* supports the approach of evidence-based medicine because we think it is a democratic, standardized way of delivering high-quality medical care to our patients. But another way to look at our world is through the wide open door of art and literature, a view that is limited only by the boundaries of our creative minds. Indeed, the purpose of images and literary writing is “to open up possibilities, not close them down.”¹

The place of the humanities—art, literature, poetry, and personal narrative—in shaping and informing today’s medical practice is no longer questioned. Their role in our understanding of the relationship between physicians and their patients is also becoming clear. In recognition of this

arena as complementary to evidence-based medicine, *wjm* is committed to enlarging and refining its humanities content.

We seek the creative thoughts and images of those who promote and contribute to the interface of medicine and the arts. How has the practice of medicine stimulated your creativity? Have you written poetry, drawn pictures, framed narratives, or taken photographs from your perspective as a caregiver? What anecdote about a professional encounter has driven you to create? Has a patient shared a creative piece about illness or loss that moved you and might assist others in understanding the unique drama of sickness? In addition to creative works, we invite essays that examine the relationship between the humanities and health.

Submissions should be no longer than 600 words, and

Janice L Willms
Section editor, *Medical Humanities*

Gavin Yamey
Deputy editor, *wjm*

Correspondence to:
Dr Willms
patho@gateway.net

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we will consider each on the basis of its relevance to the practice of medicine, the uniqueness of the experience or the image portrayed, and the quality of the work as art or literature. Your work might inspire physicians to better understand the meaning of their vocation and to put them in touch with their personal and emotional lives.² The door is wide open: we look forward to your contribution.

References

- 1 Skelton JR, Thomas CP, Macleod JAA. Teaching literature and medicine to medical students, part I: the beginning. *Lancet* 2000;356:1920-1922.
- 2 Coulehan J. The narrative road to empathy. In: Spiro HM, Curnen MG, Peschel E, St James D, eds. *Empathy and the Practice of Medicine: Beyond Pills and the Scalpel*. New Haven:Yale University Press; 1993:147-159.